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UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 000093

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SUBJECT: ELECTION OBSERVATIONS FROM THE THREE CAPES

1. (U) Summary: On April 22, voters turned out in record numbers throughout South Africa to cast their vote in the fourth democratic election since the end of apartheid in 1994. Post had six election monitoring teams covering the Eastern, Western and Northern Capes. All teams reported that the election process was running smoothly and no one reported any violence or intimidation at the polls. There were some irregularities such as an unsealed ballot box and parties campaigning too close to the polling stations, but overall the election monitors were please with what they saw. The Cape Town team spoke to Deputy President Mbete at a Rondebosch polling station regarding the elections and her plans for the future. When asked how the ANC was going to fulfill the mandate of the electorate, Mbete said that it was necessary for all elected officials to "keep their ear to the ground and get feedback" and listen to the needs and mood of the people. She added that there was room for improvement within the ANC and that the party would work harder to satisfy the electorate. End summary.

Eastern Cape

2. (U) Post sent two teams to the Eastern Cape: one to cover Port Elizabeth and the other to cover East London, the two biggest cities in the Cape. The Port Elizabeth team, headed by CG Mayberry was greeted and assisted with great hospitality and excitement in Port Elizabeth. The Team was briefed on election eve by Regional IEC Supervisor Crosby Bacela and Municipal Election Official/City Manager for Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality Graham Richards. Both officials expressed great optimism for the voting process to go smoothly and for the turnout to be extremely large. In addition to three central business district (CBD) polling sites that the team had preselected, the IEC officials provided four additional sites in the suburbs and townships to provide greater diversity in the observation process. They went further to provide a security guide to travel with the team, and the SAPS also provided a police escort to travel into the township of Madlakane. The staff and voters at each site greeted the team warmly and thanked them for coming to observe the election process.

3. (U) Overall the process was extremely efficient. At the three CBD sites, approximately 220 people were in line, and two of the three polling stations opened on time. DA was the sole party represented outside of the first two stations visited and the only one represented at the first four stations. ANC and COPE representatives were prominently present in the townships. Party agents were present in all polling stations without identifying names tags, clothing or paraphernalia. Basse in the township of Madlakane maintained the shortest line and was overall most efficient, having processed more than 33 percent of registered voters before 11AM. The overwhelming numbers of voters at all stations were older with a notable surge in younger voter in Ndzondeldelo.

4. (U) The anomalies in the Eastern Cape PE Region mirrored those throughout the nation; long lines (Motherwell had up to a six and a half hour wait and a very loud, agitated crowd); shortage of V-4 forms allowing voters to vote in province but out of precinct; strict application of rules such as the number of party agents allowed in the voting area at one time and the assistance of voters in the polling booth. Great care was taken in the change and securing of ballot boxes and police presence was evidenced at each Qsecuring of ballot boxes and police presence was evidenced at each

station. As noted by the Municipal Electoral Official the success of the process rested squarely on the shoulders of the people employed. While most were efficient and proactive, the team noted the ineffectual attitude and behavior of the one Presiding Officer in Motherwell, thus the long lines and the very long wait. Note: As the Team entered the Motherwell area, the IEC Security Guide proudly noted that Gerlad Yona was the youngest (38) Municipal Councilor ever elected to that position. Later that night, Yona, a member of COPE was murdered at his home. The speculation is that the killing was politically motivated. End note.

15. (U) The East London team, with two vehicles, visited over 20 polling stations in and around East London, including 10 in the adjacent township of Ndantsane and several in and around King William's Town. There was remarkable similarity in all the polling stations: voting was orderly, the IEC staff knew its business, procedures were followed, voters were patient, and there were no problems. Length of queues varied from station to station, and generally increased as the day wore on, but the mood of the voters was overwhelmingly pleasant. The team talked to several voters who named unemployment, crime, and education as their chief concerns.

Western Cape

16. (U) Post had two teams covering the Western Cape. One team visited polling stations in and around Cape Town, while the other team covered Stellenbosch, Paarl and Wellington. Although lines were long at all polling stations visited in the Cape Town area there were no incidences of violence, intimidation or general unrest, voters appeared calm and resigned to the fact that they would be in line for a while. Outside a voting station in Nyanga, voters had lined the sidewalk from 7:30 am and had already been waiting for four hours to cast their votes.

17. (U) The readiness of various stations to handle the influx of voters was varied. Stations in Mitchells Plain on the Cape flats were very well organized as were those visited in the Southern suburbs of Cape Town. Officials appeared to be well trained and in control of their stations, lines were long, but orderly and calm. In the townships of Nyanga and Masiphumelele officials were less well organized and at one station in Nyanga the ballot boxes were not sealed. When this was pointed out to the Presiding Officer she indicated that she was under the impression that ballot boxes only needed to be sealed once they were full. Each station visited had five voting booths, in the busier stations such as Nyanga and others this was clearly inadequate leading to long delays. All of the major political parties had representatives at the stations and all expressed satisfaction with the proceedings, even in the stations where Consulate officials noted incorrect procedures being followed. All parties adhered to the restrictions regarding campaigning outside polling stations and most were more than 150 meters away from the stations.

18. (U) Consulate officials observed Deputy President Baleka Mbete cast her vote in Rondebosch. Despite her claim to the media that she waited in line like any other voter, the team saw Mbete ushered to the head of the line and processed before other voters who had been waiting in line. Mbete addressed the media outside the station and the PolAsst spoke to the Deputy President regarding the elections and her plans for the future. When asked how the ANC was going to fulfill the mandate of the electorate, Mbete said that it was necessary for all elected officials to "keep their ear to the ground and get feedback" and listen to the needs and mood of the people. She added that there was room for improvement within the ANC and that the party would work harder to satisfy the electorate. She also indicated that the ANC's efforts would be hampered by the global economic crises. On a personal note she gave the standard politician's answer saying she had no personal ambitions and would go wherever the party needed her. Mbete was accompanied by a group of ANC supporters wearing ANC colors and carrying the ANC flag. As soon as the media arrived they broke into song. The PolAsst established that Mbete would tour polling stations around the city and that the group of ANC supporters would stay with her for the day following her from station to station.

19. (U) The Stellenbosch team visited nine polling stations and was

generally satisfied with what they saw. What was interesting is that in some towns, there were long lines at polling stations and at a different polling station only a block or two away there was no line. At the Stellenbosch Traffic Department, two voters were turned away at the polling station because they were not on the voter's rolls even though both said they had registered with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The party agent for COPE said that her party would be filing a complaint with the IEC in this matter since at least one of the would be voters intended to vote for COPE. The ANC, DA and COPE were present at every polling station to try and sway voters before they entered the polls. The ID and ACDP were also present at a few of the stations. No other political parties were present in the Western Cape. Contrary to what the other Western Cape team observed in Cape Town, the Stellenbosch team noted that in all but two of the polling stations all parties were campaigning right outside the IEC perimeter, not 150 meters away as required by the IEC. At the Paarl Town Hall, Poloff asked the IEC official about this, who said he knew the parties (ANC, COPE and DA) were violating the rules, but said he would allow the parties to remain in their locations as long as no one complained.

¶10. (U) Note. On April 23, PolAsst visited the local DA office in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town and spoke with DA representatives regarding the election results. Officials remained cautiously optimistic that the DA would win the Western Cape in its own right without the need to form any coalition, although they did hasten to add that there were still a number of votes to be counted. Even if the DA is forced to form a coalition in order to win the Western Cape, officials are happy with the results thus far, noting the increase in its support base in the Western Cape. End note.

Northern Cape

¶11. (U) Post had two teams in the Northern Cape covering Kimberley and Uppington. The Kimberley Team visited nine polling stations in addition to the Independent Electoral Commission in Kimberley. One of the nine stations the team visited was the Kimberley Correctional Centre, where inmates were voting. Party Agents at Phatsimans College of Education accused officials from the Dr. E. P. Lekhelap polling station of sending their citizens to the Phatsimans polling station. At Greenpoint station, the DA, AZIOZ and ANC party agents accused the IEC officials of not following procedures with disabled citizens and actually showed copies of complaints they had filed with the IEC. There was heavy campaigning outside the polling stations in the township. Party coverage was consistent throughout the Province with the ANC and DA more prominent in the Township. There were representatives of COPE, DA, ANC, ACDP, IFP, AZAPO and KISS. The team spoke to voters throughout the day. There were some first-time voters and most people felt the process was fair, smooth and peaceful, although slow.

¶12. (U) Northern Cape Provincial ANC Chairman John Block spoke briefly with Kimberley Election monitoring team members at the Galeshewe Day Hospital polling station. Block noted that he was very excited about elections underway and was especially pleased to see so many young people voting. He added that their participation demonstrates that they are engaged with what's happening in the country and that they are not sitting on the periphery. Not surprisingly, Block was very confident that the ANC would do well in the elections. He predicted an eighty percent voter turnout. Note. The television crew interviewing Block had uncontrolled access to the polling station while taping and interviewing Block. The crew was able to gain access without any presentation of documentation or security control. At one point the cameraman was filming voters while they voted. End note.

¶13. (U) Consulate observer team in Uppington visited 14 polling stations on election day in and around the municipality, including the predominantly colored townships of Progress and Louisvale, and the primarily black township of Paballelo. Consulate observers were impressed with the conduct of the election, both by the IEC and political parties. IEC officials at the polling stations said they encountered only a few minor problems, most notably a couple of ID scanners that needed to be replaced, but none had delayed openings.

In talking with parties outside the polls, none reported any allegations of intimidation or vote-buying. The atmosphere outside most of the polls was vibrant, with the ANC and COPE hiring sound systems outside nearly every poll in the townships that pulsated with music. Turnout on the very windy day appeared high; most polls had processed several hundred voters by mid-morning, while queues of over 100 voters were common.

¶14. (U) Comment: It did not appear that the IEC had adequately examined the number of voters registered at each station and adjusted the officials and voting equipment accordingly. Each station was given the same number of staff and equipment regardless of its size. Had an accurate assessment of the polling stations been done beforehand delays and other administrative problems could have been avoided. There was also a vast difference in competencies of staff members at the different stations, at some stations staff appeared untrained and ill prepared while other excelled. In the future IEC training for these events will need to be re-evaluated. End comment.